For the Record . . .

Post 6-5-71

The Attorney General and Gun Controls

From the press conference of Attorney General John Mitchell at the White House—June 3.

Q. Could I ask Mr. Mitchell how the administration feels about federal gun control legislation?

The Attorney General: I am surprised you asked. If you will look at the testimony that has been provided by the Treasury Department, which is the lead agency in the federal government having control of that program, you will find out where the administration stands on the subject matter. It is their responsibility.

Q. Well, sir, I am asking you.

The Attorney General: You asked me where the administration stood and I am telling you that the federal presence in that field is in the Treasury Department and they have, time and time again, testified before the Congress as to what the position of this administration is.

Q. What is your position?

The Attorney General: With respect to gun control?

Q. Yes, sir.

The Attorney General: My position is the same as it has been when I testified on the subject and that is that the legislation which was most recently passed in 1968, the legislation represents the will of the Congress on the subject matter. It should be given time to work itself out to determine whether or not it serves our problem and if we find that it does not in particular areas, well then, I think the Congress can again address itself to the subject matter.

Q. You have not answered my question, sir.

The Attorney General: I have told you exactly what my position is.

Q. I don't know what your position is, still.

The Attorney General: It is that the legislation which was enacted by the Congress is its most recent expression of its will and we should give that legislation time to be implemented and tested and determine whether or not it is serving the proper purposes of this country.

Q. Isn't three year's time enough? Don't you know and can't you tell us what you think in light of these recent killings?

The Attorney General: You are confusing two different subject matters.

Q. I am only talking about gun control.

The Attorney General: As I have said, the gun control legislation which is now on the books is the representation of the will of Congress and until we have a further period of time of working under that legislation, we will not know whether we need new legislation or legislation of a different type.

Q. You don't see a need for different legislation?

The Attorney General: Not at this particular time.